Source Material for: Our Dead Man on a Tree: Building a Coalition Beyond the Christian Industrial Complex

boydcamak.short.gy/dead-man-on-tree

The source material **strongly supports the claims** made about Boyd Camak's writing and theological vision in "Our Dead Man on a Tree: Building a Coalition Beyond the Christian Industrial Complex".

I. General Confirmation and Identity

The sources confirm Camak's identity as a **wounded witness** offering an undomesticated critique of established religion. This critique is rooted in the **visceral centrality of Christ crucified**. His theological vision is anchored in the **crucified Christ as the ultimate revelation of reality** and the **source of internal freedom**.

II. Unique Synthesis of Diverse, Non-Academic Influences

The sources confirm that Camak's thought emerges from an **organic synthesis of disparate traditions**. This parallels the claim that he arrived at profound insights without relying on academic frameworks like Kegan or Piaget.

A. The Ecumenical Toolkit of Sources

He explicitly draws on a rich and varied toolkit:

- **Mystics and Catholic Tradition:** Henri Nouwen, Ignatius of Loyola, and Jacques Philippe. He finds value in **Catholic tradition** and practices like the rosary, lectionary, commentaries, sacraments, and sacramentals.
- **Orthodox and Liberation Theology:** Rowan Williams, Thomas Hopko, Fr. Stephen Freeman, Howard Thurman, and James Cone. He refers to the **Eastern Orthodox Church** when critiquing certain atonement theories.
- **Existentialist Philosophy:** Søren Kierkegaard and Lev Shestov. His faith is explicitly labeled **"existentialist Christianity"**. He crafts an **"existentialist framework"** for his faith, emphasizing his focus on the **"real world"**.
- **Other Spiritual Paths:** He has explored quasi-new age material like Eckhart Tolle, Hinduism, and Islam, and connects with Buddhist concepts.
- **Therapeutic and Psychological Insights:** He incorporates therapeutic models like **Marsha Linehan's Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)** and mentions **Bowen Systems Theory** to address issues like codependency and trauma.

III. Centrality of the "Dead Man on a Tree" (Crucifixion)

The core claim that the **"dead man on a tree"** (the Crucifixion) serves as the visceral, unifying, and participatory center of his theology is powerfully supported. The Crucifixion is the **visceral, political, and participatory core** of his theology.

A. The Cross as Visceral Reality and Judgment

Camak insists that Christ's death is not an abstraction, demanding focus on the shocking, physical reality to cut through **"religious anesthesia"**.

- He refers to the crucifixion as a **"lynching tree"** or an **"electric chair"** and a **"violent bloody spectacle,"** reinforcing the claim that the imagery is **"visceral enough... that it breaks through religious anesthesia"**.
- He calls the event **"the snuff film of Good Friday"**.
- He refers to the cross as the **"judgment seat of God"** and says that Christ's death was the **"ultimate act of self-sacrifice on the cross, and his vindication by his resurrection"**.
- He emphasizes that the crucifixion is the **ultimate revelation of reality**, exposing the **"emptiness of worldly power"** and the **"extremes of God's love"**.
- The cross is the **"one place that we know that we see God,"** exposing the **"impotence of evil"** and the **"powerlessness of those intoxicated by its lies"**.

B. Co-Crucifixion and Participation

The concept of shared suffering is paramount; the cross is a spiritual mechanism for liberation through shared suffering.

- He states that **"He is crucified with us, and we with Him"**.
- He insists on **"co-crucifixion with Christ is the way through"**.
- He views life as a **"crucifixion conference"**.
- He teaches that we find internal freedom by attaching personal burdens to Christ's suffering. He states that **"once we are 'co-crucified with Christ, there's nothing the SOBs can do against us anymore'"**.
- He teaches that we **"can literally attach our sufferings to Christ"** and become **"co-resurrected"** through co-crucifixion.

IV. Critique of the Christian Industrial Complex (CIC)

The sources fully substantiate the claim that Camak speaks prophetically against the **"Christian Industrial Complex"** (CIC) and **"false peace"**. He is committed to an **"Anti-institutional from the jump"** critique, viewing the commodification and performance of faith as demonic.

A. Industrialization and Commodification of Faith

- He uses the term **"Christian industrial complex"** in critique, noting with alarm that **"They've industrialized the path to God"**.
- He is highly critical of the commercialization of faith, arguing that selling spiritual writing is **"like demanding money when someone asks you for directions"** or **"requiring a toll in order to see a road sign"**.
- He critiques the idea of "platforms" and spiritual branding, stating that **"Mustard seeds don't grow on platforms. And platforms can't love"**.
- He critiques the emphasis on external performance, dismissing Evangelical models like moving **"from success to significance"** because **"everyone is significant"** simply by being **"children of God"**.
- He dismisses the Evangelical saying that men should move **"from success to significance"** as older men, arguing it misses the entire point by trying to make men **"feel important"**. He insists that every single thing that happens is significant because individuals are **"children of God,"** regardless of their achievements.

B. Critique of Theological Scaffolding and False Gospels

- He states that **"most theology is demonic"** and believes atonement theories exist mainly **"to please theologians, not God"**.
- He argues that trying to understand how the **"life ring was made"** (theological details) causes believers to **"miss the point"** and become a **"church nerd club"**.
- He insists that the Gospel is **"so simple that it upends all of [his] categories and exposes the vacuity of all of [his] intellectual constructs"**.
- He notes that American "revivals" were often based on **"shame and fear—'Sinners in the hands of an angry God' anyone?"**.
- He vehemently rejects the **"believe or burn"** mentality and the Penal Substitutionary Atonement theory, which he argues is **"not the gospel"** and is **"ridiculous, and it's a lie"**.

V. Theological Critique of Empire and Power

The sources offer extensive support for the claim that Boyd Camak offers a fundamental **"Theological Critique of Empire and Power"**. This critique views the conflation of Christianity with political or cultural authority as a profound betrayal of the Gospel.

A. The Irreconcilable Conflict: Jesus and Empire

- Camak explicitly states: **"I cannot be for Jesus and for empire"**.
- He argues that this conflict is revealed most clearly on the cross, adding: **"If I can't see this when looking at a crucifix, I need to look harder, longer, and more frequently"**.
- He defines the nature of empire, stating that **"Power and control and therefore cruelty seem essential for any 'empire'"**.
- This stance is rooted in the belief that the true power of Christ is sacrificial love, which exposed the impotence of evil and the **"powerlessness of those intoxicated by its lies"**.

- He views Christianity's **"historical ties to empire"** as having made it **"much less amenable to critical thinking"**.

B. Critique of Western Civilization and American Christianity

Camak treats the notion of defending Western Civilization as a theological distraction and a major error.

- **Rejection of National Identity:** He asserts that **"There is no 'American Christianity.' There is just *Christianity*. And it's not American"**. He views much of contemporary American Christianity as **"false revelation"** or superficial. He believes that **"most of contemporary American Christianity is false revelation"** and that many species of **"bullshit"** go by the name of Christianity in the United States but have **"nothing to do with the life and teaching of Jesus"**.
- **Irrelevance to the Gospel:** He repeatedly argues that preoccupation with **"western civilizat[ion]"** is **"irrelevant to the gospel"**. He suggests that if a church group insists on focusing on something irrelevant to the gospel, they could find topics **"better than western civilization"**.
- **Cultural Artifact:** He dismisses Western Civilization as merely a **"cultural artifact that is completely irrelevant to our lives as Christ's children,"** arguing it holds **"no more relevance than any other incidental fact in the world"**.
- **Profound Theological Error:** He critiques the Christian nationalist movement and conservative Catholics who are **"conflating or confusing Christ's Kingdom with Western Civilization, or with America,"** labeling this the **"very type of thing… that Kierkegaard wrote about when he compared Christianity to Christendom"**. He calls this conflation a **"profound theological error"**.

C. The Cross as a Confrontation with Worldly Power

Camak frames Jesus's suffering as a concrete confrontation with state and religious authority.

- **State-Sponsored Killing:** He issues a fierce condemnation of Christian justification for state violence, stating: **"If you think that your Christian faith justifies your state-sponsored killing, then I pity you more than those that you are executing"**.
- **Misusing God's Name:** He clarifies that taking God's name in vain means **"using God's name to justify things that God would damn,"** citing examples like **"lawless detention and deportation"** and **"snuffing out lives with the power of the state"**.
- **Pilate and Suffering:** He finds deep theological significance in the creedal phrase **"suffered under Pontius Pilate,"** viewing it as contemplation on the **"universal experience of suffering at the hands of worldly powers"**. The crucifixion revealed the brutal **"alliance between the corrupt civil authorities and the corrupt religious authorities"**.
- **The Sword of Truth:** Jesus' statement, **"I did not come to bring peace, but a sword,"** is interpreted as the introduction of a divisive truth that exposes the **"false peace rooted**

in conformity, tribal loyalty, and inherited structures of power," specifically cutting through oppressive family and communal culture.

D. Christ's Kingdom: Revealed, Not Enforced

Camak's critique of empire is based on his understanding that Christ's Kingdom operates under a logic entirely opposite to that of worldly power.

- **Kingdom as Reality:** Christ's Kingdom is defined as a **"metaphysical reality with a capital R,"** a **"revelation of Reality, of what is actually the case"**. It **"does not need to be enforced or promoted any more than *gravity* needs to be enforced or promoted"**.
- **Rejection of Political Coercion:** Using **politics to enforce Christian values** or preserve Christian culture **"misunderstands Christ at the most essential level"**. Attempting to enforce a societal vision through politics means enforcing one's own will and acting as a "tyrant".
- **Refusal of Worldly Glory:** Jesus refused the temptation to gain **"all the kingdoms of the world"** without the cross. Camak argues that to focus on cultural dominance is to mistake the source of power; the gospel depends only on **"Christ crucified and risen,"** not on Rome, Geneva, Washington, or London.
- **Internal Freedom:** The Christian "Way" taught by Christ leads to **"internal freedom"** from **"unjust or corrupt external authority,"** which includes the fear and control used by governments. This internal freedom is achieved by putting one's chips **"on Christ crucified"** and allowing oneself to be **"completely crucifies you to the world, to the culture, to everything, to one's family"**.

VI. Theology from the Margins and Unconventional Voice

Camak's method is supported as being deeply personal, undomesticated, and rooted in suffering, positioning him as a voice **"from the margins that still loves the tradition"**. His writing style is deliberate and rhetorical, designed to be **"raw, unedited processing"** that compels attention and liberates the wounded.

A. Woundedness and Humility

He consistently frames his work as emerging from his personal struggles.

- He frequently writes about feeling **"thrown / Disoriented / Unmoored"** and openly grappling with trauma.
- He describes himself as a **"hypocrite with logs in my eyes"** in almost every post [3, 5, 8, etc.], reflecting his commitment to internal honesty over external polish.
- He rejects spiritual pride, embracing the wisdom gained from **"suffering, mysticism, liberation, and therapeutic practice"**.

B. Confrontational and Liberating Rhetoric

His rhetorical style is jarring, confrontational, and radical, designed to **"name bullshit"** and shatter complacency.

- He uses strong, unpolished language.
- He calls the Roman Catholic teaching on mortal sin and eternal damnation **"complete bullshit,"** arguing **"Jesus is the one who harrows hell—not the one who sends people there"**.
- He labels Calvinism's TULIP acronym **"metaphysical rape"** because he believes it denies humanity and turns grace into **"coercion"**.
- He acknowledges his rough, raw style, calling his writing **"verbal vomit"** and stating that he doesn't aim for systematic theology, but rather for **"survival notes"** and **"field notes from the depths"**. This aligns with the claim that his work is **"raw, unedited processing"** and an intuitive synthesis.
- He believes the **"first form of resistance is telling the truth"**.
- His focus is on providing **"internal freedom"** from **"unjust or corrupt external authority"** and **"religious abuse"**.

Key Excerpts Illustrating Main Themes

The following are key excerpts, organized by major theme, which illustrate Boyd Camak's theological and existential perspective.

1. Unique Synthesis and Non-Academic Approach

Sub-Theme	Excerpt and Citation
Raw, Unedited Voice	"This blog is **vendor verbal vomit**. The only thing I have to sell is sin, confusion, blindness, vice, disorder, profanity, despair, and death. I hear that sometimes the Holy Spirit uses this collage of cliches and foolishness to do some good.".
Theological Source Material	"I [according to AI] arrived at insights about how humans make meaning and how people actually change spiritually by synthesizing the **phenomenology of suffering and transformation**, **liberation theology's critique of systems**, **Orthodox participatory theology**, **therapeutic insights** about consciousness, and **existential focus on lived experience**.".
Existential Framework	"I worked out an entire **existentialist framework** to live my faith in the chaos & madness of the world that I felt thrown into without resorting to closed systems or tribalism or a leap of faith-hoping that there was more than the material world-clinging to evidence of a fuller Reality.".

Focus on Practice (Catholic/Orthodox)	"When I pray the rosary... I am making an interior dive into a living experience of the events of the gospel. And they **arrest my mind**.".
Ecumenical Need	"Real ecumenism requires admitting we're all drowning... **We're all drowning. Let's share our life rings instead of arguing about whose ring is the right shape**.".

2. Centrality of the "Dead Man on a Tree" (Crucifixion)

Sub-Theme	Excerpt and Citation
Co-Crucifixion as Contentment	"Radical contentment: **God will provide. And if not, He is crucified with us, and we with Him**.".
The Cross as Visceral Reality	"I find myself dulled to the horror of the Crucifixion so I think about an **electric chair or a lynching tree** as an analogy".
Crucifixion as Political Act	"This is what Christians call a crucifixion-an existential crucifixion... He did everything right and ended up being **executed in the worst way possible by an alliance between the religious authorities and the government**.".
Crucifixion as Revelation	"Joy and pain are comingled at the root of our reality... This is most fully revealed on the cross where the **worst possible evil reveals the best possible good**." He also states, "**Life is a crucifixion conference**.".
Fear of False Peace	"**Being crucified by the world doesn't surprise or scare me. *Not* being crucified by the world surprises and scares me**.".

3. Critique of the Christian Industrial Complex (CIC) and Empire

Sub-Theme	Excerpt and Citation
Against Western Civilization	"**If we're going to focus on something irrelevant to the gospel, I think that we could come up with something better than western civilizat[ion]**.".
Against Commercialization	"The **Christian Industrial Complex** is much worse... **They've industrialized the path TO God**.".
Against Selling Faith	"**Selling spiritual writing is like demanding money when someone asks you for directions—or requiring a toll in order to see a road sign**.".

Against Abstract Theology	"hot take: **most theology is demonic**." Theology is deemed "demonic" when it prioritizes intellectual constructs, fear, or control over the simple, transformative reality of Christ's love He also writes: "The gospel is not sophisticated. It is so simple that it upends all of my categories and **exposes the vacuity of all of my intellectual constructs**.".
Kingdom vs. Power	"**Christ's kingdom does not need to be 'encouraged' any more than gravity needs to be encouraged**. It is a metaphysical Reality that simply is.".
Against Performance	"True Christianity is not about getting God to like us more or proving that we're virtuous people or getting 'saved' metaphorically stamped on our forehead. It's about being sane, and joyful, and peaceful and knowing how to cope with the tragic and the absurd and the evil.".

4. Theology from the Margins (Wounded Witness and Authenticity)

Sub-Theme	Excerpt and Citation
Wounded Self-Designation	He consistently signs off most posts: "Posted on [Date] by Boyd Camak, **hypocrite with logs in my eyes** (Matthew 7:3-5) Admiring the counterintuitive way. (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)".
Gospel as Self-Transformation	"The gospel is not relevant to me. **I am relevant to the Christian gospel**. The point often is not to answer my question, but to **transform the questioner, to transform me**.".
Facing Existential Hell	"It's not about avoiding hell. It's a recognition that **life already is hell**—although it often takes something shocking or tragic for us to recognize that.".
Radical Dependence/Surrender	"I have to be ready to surrender everything at any point in time- that's just how the kingdom of heaven works. If I'm not willing to avoid clinging to anything other than Christ, then that means I am letting go of the only source of wisdom, strength, and interior peace and freedom.".
Internal Freedom	Christianity is a "**Way that leads to internal freedom from external authorities and forces that try to control, shame, or manipulate individuals**.".

Vocation is Mundane	He highlights the "reality of **dirty diapers**, the reality of **packing lunches**, the reality of getting my kids on the school bus, the reality of **making money to provide for my family**" as his primary mission.